



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

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MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE BOARD
VICTIM ACCESS HEARINGS

This pamphlet is designed to explain the rights victims and their families have in the parole process. M.G.L. c. 127, s. 133C states: The family members of a deceased victim may represent the victim at any parole hearing for a prisoner serving a sentence for a crime which resulted in the death of such victim. For the purposes of this section, family members shall include: parent, stepparent or guardian of the victim, spouse or person with whom the victim lived in a relationship similar to marriage, child, stepchild, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin and guardian of the minor child or stepchild of the victim.

Legislation enacted in 2001 expanded the Victim Access Hearing program to include victims, and parents or legal guardians of minor victims, of a sex offense or a violent crime (where a sentence of one year or more was imposed) the opportunity to attend and testify at parole hearings.

M.G.L. c. 127, s. 133E states: Victims, and parents or legal guardians of minor victims, of a violent crime or a sex offense for which a sentence was imposed, who have been registered by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) in accordance with section 172 of chapter 6 and section 3 of chapter 258B, may testify in person at the parole hearing of the perpetrator of the crime of which they were victims, or submit written testimony to the Parole Board.

ATTENDING THE VICTIM ACCESS HEARING

Who is notified of the Victim Access Hearing?

Any individual who is registered by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services will be notified in advance of the scheduled parole hearing.

Who may attend the hearing?

Surviving family members of homicide whose relationship to the victim is specified by the statute may attend and participate (pursuant to M.G.L. c. 127, s. 133C above) and victims and parents or legal guardians of minor aged victims who have been registered by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services.

Who will be present at the parole hearing and where will the hearing be held?

1. *If the crime resulted in a death or the crime was violent in nature or a sex offense as defined M.G.L. c. 127, s. 133E, and the inmate is serving a state sentence:* the Parole Board members, the inmate, the Victim Services Coordinator, the family members and correctional staff will all be present. These hearings are held at the Parole Board's Central Office in Natick, MA.

2. *If the offense was a violent crime or a sex offense as defined by M.G.L. c. 127, s. 133E, and the inmate is serving a house of correction sentence:* the Victim Services Coordinator will accompany the victim into the county facility where the Parole Board member would conduct the hearing with the inmate present.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A PAROLE HEARING

Introduction and administration of oath to testify truthfully

The presenting Parole Board member will convene the hearing, introduce the panel of Parole Board members and administer an oath to all those wishing to testify.

Interview of the inmate

The inmate will be asked questions by the Parole Board members about the crime that was committed, his or her record of incarceration, his or her readiness and plans for parole release and any other issues the members deem to be relevant.

Your testimony

The victim and/or family member(s) will have an opportunity to address the members of the Parole Board. **No one is required to testify.** The Parole Board allows five (5) victims and/or family members to speak for five (5) minutes each. All testimony must be directed to the members of the Parole Board.

Concluding the hearing

At the conclusion of the victim's and/or family members' testimony, the inmate may make a closing statement to the Board members.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THOSE WHO ATTEND THE PAROLE HEARING

Those wishing to attend the Victim Access Hearing **MUST** contact the Victim Services Unit by the deadline contained in the hearing notification letter. In order to gain access to the hearing each person **MUST**:

- be a surviving family member whose relationship to the victim as defined by statute OR be a victim, parent guardian of a minor aged victim **and** be certified by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services,
- present photo identification,
- be subject to a search of handbags, packages and
- be processed through a metal detector.

For additional information, please contact the Victim Services Coordinator assigned to your case at:

**Massachusetts Parole Board
Victim Services Unit
508-650-4500
12 Mercer Road
Natick, MA 01760**